Neuhutten Wanderings

Alexander T. Englert

Gettysburg College, englal02@cnav.gettysburg.edu
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Author Bio
Alexander T. Englert is a junior currently studying abroad at Heidelberg University in Heidelberg, Germany. Born and raised in Colorado, he loves traveling but still misses the west.

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Neuhütten is a small German village in northern Bavaria, which is nestled deep in the Spessart Forest. First mention of it in written history dates back to 1349 as being the location of four glass-blowing huts. On April 1, 1945, it was bombed by Allied warplanes. The destroyed portions were rebuilt. Small history and small population. A village in the truest sense of the word.

Walking through Neuhütten in the morning was a settling and, at the same time, impactful experience. The morning fog was thick and as I walked the sun was sweeping it up like years of dust. At one point a hillside was revealed. Green, unmowed grass, yet flush and not dominated by weeds. Sheep in a paddock nearby chatted with each other.

On a bench, I sat to write some thoughts. A tree was overhead. Dew on the leaves clicked as it fell onto other leaves, desiccated from autumn. Drops would land in my hair, on my notebook, and on my hands.

Walking again, I heard heavy hoof-falls. Out of the mist a horse came galloping over to me. It stood feet away from me, separated by three lines of barbed wire. It stared at me, as if waiting for me to initiate conversation. Its breathing was heavy and I said, "Du bist schön." It gave a high-pitched cry and went galloping away, disappearing into the mist.

Later I saw the horse’s fenced pen free of fog and noticed how small it was. In the mist, maybe the horse forgot about its captivity; forgot it was trapped and was excited by the encounter with another breather. Strange sweet-talk and the presence of the fence disgusted it, leading it on in its desperate search for freedom.

Maybe we all are in the same situation as the horse: trapped, surrounded by fog...

My walk, though, took me further. Muddy paths led me past dewy spider webs that ornamented trees like white lace, aged and moth eaten. The path encircled a lake. Ducks swam expectantly toward me. Fat and content. They were the only disturbance on its surface. Gold and orange mirrored from a forest.

By eleven o’clock, the fog was nearly gone.

Then...finally... people. A woman passed by in a car. Two people in their “free” existences, floating past. A man worked in a garden, laboring to pull up a radish. As I passed they waved and smiled. Smiling people. People who didn’t care that my smiling face was foreign. It is what is most important in the world, regardless of whether the freedom we yearn for is nonexistent. It is our peopled community - our village - that is both home and feels like it.